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February 17, 2011

Delegate Peter A. Hammen
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 240 House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SUPPORT- HB 450:

Maryland Community Health Resources Commission - Health Care Reform Safety Net Providers"

Dear Chairman Hammen and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The University of Maryland School of Nursing Governor's Wellmobile Program, in its role as both community health resource and safety net provider, supports House Bill 450. The Governor's Wellmobile Program leadership participated in the **Public Health, Safety Net and Special Populations Health Care Reform Coordinating Council Workgroup** meetings. The Subcommittee's draft White Paper recognized that traditional safety-net providers will be challenged to revise their business model and operating practices to take advantage of the opportunities to serve many of their current clients who will become newly-covered individuals as a result of health reform. It is anticipated that 5-7% of the population that will remain uninsured after implementation of health reform. Historical safety-net providers, such as the Governor's Wellmobile Program, will need to be credentialed and privileged by third party-payers, including commercial, managed care, and Health Choice to incorporate revenues from third party payers and attain fiscal sustainability. Since many safety-net providers depend on voluntary workforce, grants and contracts in lieu of billing to sustain their current operations, revenues have been used to support direct service delivery. There have been little or no revenues to develop Information Systems Technology (IT), including purchase of electronic health records and billing and collection systems. HB 450 provides opportunity to support information technology, billing and collections capacity for Maryland's safety-net providers.

Since 1994, the Governor's Wellmobile Program, a fleet of four mobile primary care clinics, administered by the University of Maryland School of Nursing, has been a vital component of Maryland's safety net provider network. Through partnerships with health systems and community service organizations across the state, underserved and uninsured populations in need of primary care have been identified and service sites established. The program continues to serve as a vital link in the safety net for the uninsured.

Unfortunately State support for the Wellmobile Program has been eliminated in the proposed FY 2012 State budget. Although this is very disappointing, the University of Maryland School of Nursing would like to partner with other providers in building new primary care delivery models which can assure sustainability. Like our program, some of the local health department clinics and school-based health centers across the state are in need of infrastructure upgrades and technical assistance to establish/